

BALTIMORE NEWS AMERICAN
21 August 1980**JACK ANDERSON****How would Kremlin react to an invasion of Iran?**

This is the fourth in a series of controversial columns by Jack Anderson which claim that President Carter has developed a secret plan to invade Iran on the eve of the November election. The White House denies the existence of such a plan.

If President Carter should go ahead with his plan to invade Iran in October, he would risk war with the Soviet Union. There have already been ominous rumblings out of the Kremlin, warning of Soviet retaliation if Iran should be attacked.

A Soviet-American clash over Iran, of course, could become the opening skirmish of World War III. This is the awesome danger that Carter is courting for the sake of hyping his political appeal on election eve.

The president is not unaware of the danger. He has directed the intelligence community to produce a secret estimate of how the Kremlin will react to a limited invasion of Iran. The first concern, of course, is what the Soviets will do. But there could also be ugly repercussions in the Moslem world.

The Defense Intelligence Agency has been ordered to "study and report on possible Soviet military reactions to various scenarios in which the United States forces have invaded Iran." The assignment of the Central Intelligence Agency is to gauge the political fallout.

Military analysts are confident at least that the Iranians cannot stop a U.S. assault. A three-star general told me that Iran's armed forces are in a "state of chaos." The Soviets, however, have a powerful military juggernaut in the Persian Gulf area.

This includes 10 warships and 16 support ships, with others on the way. Seven airborne divisions and several air mobile brigades can also be rushed to Iran.

Analysts have narrowed down the Soviet response to four options: (1) military intervention; (2) diplomatic opposition; (3) official indifference; or (4) clandestine cooperation. My associate Dale Van Atta has sounded out key sources in the intelligence community. Here's how they appraise the Soviet attitude:

■ The analysts agree that the Soviets would rather deal with Jimmy Carter than the unyield-

ing Ronald Reagan for the next four years. This already has been signaled through their faithful ally, Fidel Castro, who sent word by diplomatic channels that he won't do anything to embarrass Carter before November.

■ To reduce the danger of a confrontation with the Soviet Union, Carter is expected to sound out the Kremlin in advance about his October plan. There is a distinct possibility that the Soviets would bring heavy pressure on the Iranians to release the American hostages in an attempt to avert a U.S. invasion.

■ The Kremlin might even be inclined to cooperate behind the scenes to help free the hostages by military means. Sources say that the Soviet KGB knows the location of each hostage and might help a U.S. rescue force secure their release. This would hand Carter a dramatic coup just before Americans go to the polls. The grateful Carter, in turn, might lift the grain embargo, reactivate the SALT II treaty and give the Soviets access to more U.S. technology.

■ There is another, more sinister scenario. Intelligence reports claim that the Soviets have their own designs on northern Iran. Working through the communist Tudeh party, they are maneuvering to gain control of the northern provinces. They might condone a limited U.S. invasion, in the south, therefore, if the United States will keep hands off the north. This could result in partitioning Iran into Soviet and American spheres of influence. The analysts, however, say such an under-the-table deal is unlikely.

But one thing is certain. The president would be foolhardy to go ahead with an October invasion of Iran unless he obtains a back-channel understanding with the Soviets.

Footnote: Half an hour after the U.S. rescue team crossed into Iranian airspace on their abortive April mission to free the hostages, the Soviets were alerted. A U.S. reconnaissance plane detected communications signals "consistent with the Russians being placed on alert." Later, President Carter put through a hot-line call to the Kremlin to explain the mission.

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